



OUR SATURDAY NIGHT SUPPER TABLE SERIES. A Diet for Mental Dyspepsia—A Salad for Small Salaries, AND A SALVE FOR BAD CUTS. The whole carefully compounded and put up expressly for Family Use. BY OUR SERIES EDITOR. NUMBER CXXLIX.

From Our Own Correspondent. WIRE BRIDGEPORT, MANTUA, Nov. 10, 1869.

Mr. Series Editor:— I have a couple of neighbors who might be called "representative men," only that one of them is a woman: nevertheless they are representatives of a class who, paying no attention to the graduates of the Medical Colleges, male or female, doctor themselves, making up for the quality of the nursing by its quantity. They devote their whole minds, as they only have one mind in common, to nursing, and the object of their attention is themselves.



Mr. and Mrs. Rakestraw are a couple who nurse themselves; and the venerable Mrs. Brown is an aider and abettor in the same. Mr. Rakestraw is a rather lean and long-necked gentleman, middle-aged and middle-sized, and usually troubled with a cold in the head. Mrs. Rakestraw is a delicate-looking lady, with very light hair, and is exceedingly subject to the same unpleasant disorder. The venerable Mrs. Brown, who is strictly entitled to the appellation, her daughter not being very young (otherwise than by courtesy) at the time of her marriage, which was some years ago, is a mysterious old lady who lurks behind a pair of spectacles and is afflicted with a chronic disease, respecting which she has taken a vast deal of medical advice, and referred to a vast number of medical books, without meeting any definition of symptoms that at all suit her, or enables her to say "That's my complaint!" Indeed, the absence of authentic information upon the subject of this complaint would seem to be Mrs. Brown's greatest ill, as in all other respects she is an uncommonly hale and hearty woman.



Both Mr. and Mrs. Rakestraw wear an extraordinary quantity of flannel, and have a habit of putting their feet in hot water to an unusual extent. They likewise indulge in chamomile tea and such like compounds, and rub themselves on the slightest provocation with compound spirits and other lotions applicable to bumps, sore throat, rheumatism, or lumbago. Mr. Rakestraw's leaving home to go to business on a damp or wet morning is



a very elaborate affair. He puts on very long stockings over his socks, and india-rubber shoes over his boots, and wears under his waistcoat a cushion of rabbit-skin. Besides these precautions he winds a thick shawl round his throat, and blocks up his mouth with a large silk handkerchief. Thus accoutered, and furnished besides with a great coat and umbrella, he braves the dangers of the streets, travelling in severe weather at a gentle trot, the better to preserve the circulation, and bringing his mouth to the surface to take breath but very seldom, and with the utmost caution. His office door opened, he shoots past his clerks at the same pace, and, diving into his own private room, closes the door, examines the window fastenings, and gradually unrobes himself, hanging his pocket handkerchief on a chair before the stove to air, and determining to write to the newspapers about the year, which he says "has really got to that pitch that it is quite unbearable."

In this last opinion Mrs. Rakestraw and her respected mother fully concur; for though not present, their thoughts and tongues are occupied with the same subject, living in sight of the river, which is their constant theme all day. If anybody happens to call, Mrs. Rakestraw opines that they must assuredly be mad, and her first salutation is, "What, what in the name of goodness can bring you out in such weather? You know you must catch your death." This assurance is corroborated by Mrs. Brown, who adds, in further confirmation, a dismal legend con-

cerning an individual of her acquaintance who, making a call under precisely parallel circumstances, and being then in the best health and spirits, expired in forty-eight hours afterwards. The visitor, rendered not altogether comfortable, perhaps, by this and other precedents, inquires very affectionately after Mr. Rakestraw, but by so doing brings about no change of subject; for Mr. R's name is inseparably connected with his complaints, and his complaints are inseparably connected with Mrs. Rakestraw's; and when these are done with, Mrs. Brown, who has been biding her time, cuts in with the chronic disorder—a subject upon which the amiable old lady never leaves off speaking until she is left alone, and very often not then.



But Mr. Rakestraw comes home to dinner. He is received by Mrs. Rakestraw and Mrs. Brown, who, on his remarking that he thinks his feet are damp, turn pale as ashes, and drag him up stairs, imploring him to have them rubbed directly with a dry coarse towel. Rubbed they are, one by Mrs. Rakestraw, one by Mrs. Brown, until the friction causes Mr. Rakestraw to make horrible faces, and looks as if he had been smelling very powerfully of onions; when they desist, and the patient, provided for his better security with thick worsted stockings and list slippers, is borne down stairs to dinner. Now, the dinner is a good one, the appetites of the diners being not at all delicate. Both Mr. and Mrs. R. eat a remarkably good dinner, and even the afflicted Mrs. Brown wields her knife and fork with much of the spirit and the elasticity of youth. But Mr. Rakestraw, in his desire to gratify his appetite, is not unmindful of his health; for he has a bottle of carbonate of soda, with which to qualify his porter. Either from eating and drinking so much, or from being the victim of this constitutional infirmity, he falls asleep, and has scarcely closed his eyes when Mrs. Rakestraw and Mrs. Brown close their eyes likewise. It is on awakening at tea-time that their most alarming symptoms prevail, for then Mr. R. feels as if his temples were tightly bound around with the chain of the street door, and Mrs. R. as if she had made a hearty dinner of a hundred half-pound weights, and Mrs. Brown as if cold water were running down her back, and oyster-knives were trying to open her between the ribs. Symptoms like these are enough to make people peevish, and no wonder they do little more than doze and complain.

Supper coming after dinner, it is again done honor to by Mr. and Mrs. Rakestraw, still aided and abetted by Mrs. Brown. After supper, it is ten to one but the last named old lady becomes worse, and is led off to bed with her chronic complaint in full vigor. Mr. and Mrs. Rakestraw, having administered to her a warm cordial, then repair to their own room, where Mr. R., with his legs and feet in hot water, superintends the mulling of some wine which he is to drink at the very moment he plunges into bed; while Mrs. R., in garments whose nature is unknown to all but married men, takes four small pills, with a spasmodic look between each, and finally comes to something hot and fragrant out of another little sauce-pan, which serves for the composing draught for the night, when, smacking her lips and groaning, she crawls into bed. Thus literally, as well as figuratively, they all their lifetime are in hot water.



Yours healthfully, Doc.

Augustan Ages.

Under what kind of political circumstances does genius most flourish? This is a very old question, and it is a question which will never allow of any one trenchant answer. There are so many different kinds and degrees of genius, there are so many different ways of thinking as to what genius is, that no general rule can be laid down about it. A great poet and a great discoverer in physical science are alike men of genius, but their genius is so unlike in kind that we cannot safely infer that the state of things which is most likely to produce the one is also the most likely to produce the other. Again, there are many different kinds of poetry, each alike allowing the display of genius, but of which one seems most likely to flourish in one state of society and another in another. And then how do we estimate genius? By positive or by relative results? Take, for instance, the case of inventions. Which really shows the greater genius, the man who brings a thing to the highest possible point of perfection, or the man who, long before, had been strictly the inventor of the first rude form of the thing? The first rude kind of boat, for example, seems ludicrously clumsy beside the latest improvements in navigation. Yet one may be tempted to say that no author of any later improvement in navigation showed so much of daring and original genius as the man who first set any kind of boat afloat on the water. The one was strictly an inventor; the other simply worked on the inventions of another. But, again, two answers might be made to this kind of argument. It might be said, with some plausibility, that the chances are that the inherent genius of the two men was kindred and equal, and that each, in the circumstances of the other, would have done what the other did. Or again, it may be said that most likely there never was any invention in the strictest sense of all; that the earliest stages of any art are just as much matters of gradual development as the latest, and that in the earliest stages there is much more room for accident than in the latest. Still, with all this, it is hard not to allow a good deal of inventive genius to the first beginners of the very simplest thing. If Argo was the first ship, great honor is due to Thyphus and his brother Argonauts. And at any rate the first man who ever got on the back of a horse must have been a bold man and a decided genius in his own line. Endless questions of this kind may be raised, and endless answers may be found for them, all

tending to show that no general rule can be given on the subject. Certain forms of genius, certain forms of activity, are certainly lower than others—of intellectual activity—are undoubtedly most likely to appear under certain forms of political or social life. But genius, and more intellectual activity also, take such endless forms that it is hopeless to lay down any general rule as to this or that form of government or state of society being most favorable to one or the other in the abstract.

We have been led into this train of thought, as into so many other trains of thought, by an article in the Times. The writer, whose article appeared in the course of last week, is evidently far from being so rash and ignorant as many of his brethren. He is trying to account for the real or alleged decay of intellectual life in France under the present Government of that country. And, whether we accept all his facts and conclusions or not, what he says on that head, as well as on the present state of things in England, Spain, and Italy, is worthy of thinking over and weighing. He has evidently looked with care and intelligence at the present condition of all those countries with regard to their current literature. It is only when he tries to deal with past times, and to draw general principles from what he fancies to be the facts of history, that he gets beyond his depth. We will give the passage at length:—

"Genius works in cycles; it has its rich and poor crops, its prize and blank seasons, its so-called golden ages, and its periods of barrenness. Indeed, by political causes, as crops by atmospheric accidents, but obeying also other more general, less obvious or superficial rules, acting not only independently of all political influences, but sometimes even in antagonism to it. The stage in the life of a nation in which mental energy is apt to be at its greatest height is that in which after a period of political convulsions, a period of comparative ease and repose succeeds. Thus the golden age of Roman literature comes from the closing of the Temple of Janus by the Emperor Augustus; that of modern Italy from the termination of mediæval feuds ushering in domestic tyranny and foreign domination; that of England from the subsiding of religious dissensions under the sceptre of Elizabeth. Golden ages of this description are always of short duration, and are followed by eras of silver, of iron, of bronze, and even of lead. A cluster of eras, or a period of the first magnitude blaze out in the firmament, but these give way before minor galaxies, and presently to mere nebulae and obscurity."

The context seems to show that by "genius" in this passage we are to understand, if not exclusively literary genius, yet genius taking the direction of some form of literature, science, or art. For it must be evident to every one that some shapes of "mental energy" never have so much scope as in the actual "spell of great political convulsions." The genius of the real statesman or the real general is as much a display of "mental energy" as the genius of the poet or the painter. And it is clearly while the great political convulsions are going on that the real statesman and the real general find their noblest opportunity. And some of the works of times of this kind cannot be distinguished by any hard line from strict works of literature. What does the writer say to oratory? Whether the speeches of any given public speaker become or do not become part of the literature of his country depends largely upon accident or upon the custom of his age and country. The speeches of Demosthenes form part of the literature of Greece; the speeches of Pericles do not. There is no reason to be given for this difference except that in the days of Pericles it had not become the custom for orators to write down and preserve their speeches, while in the days of Demosthenes it had. It may be answered that one or two speeches of Pericles are preserved by Thucydides, and doubtless, as regards the general sentiments of Pericles, they are preserved. But no one supposes that the report of Thucydides gives us any idea of the style of Pericles; what he gives us is the sentiments of Pericles translated into his own style. As a literary composition, then, the funeral oration of Pericles is as much lost to us as are the countless other speeches of Pericles which Thucydides did not report at all. But though the speeches of Demosthenes form, while the speeches of Pericles do not form, a part of the literature of Greece, there is no real difference between the two. There is simply the accident that the one set of speeches were written down and that the others were not. The two sets of compositions were essentially of the same kind. Pericles and Demosthenes alike composed real speeches for real delivery, and, as far as we know, they composed nothing else. They did not sit down, like Isocrates, and write essays or pamphlets which were meant not to be spoken but to be read. As far as they were really great Greek writers, not of mere scholarship, but of the best of his days as the citizen and statesman of a free commonwealth.

It is somewhat strange that the writer makes no reference whatever to the literature of old Greece. Certainly there is no literature whose history more thoroughly upsets his theory. To whatever date we assign the Homeric poems, we can hardly fancy that they are the work of an age of special ease and repose, and it is certain that the recorded literature of Greece, from Archilochus to Demosthenes, was the work of very stirring times indeed. Its greatest displays of mental energy took place in the midst of the political convulsions of the Persian, the Peloponnesian, and the Macedonian wars. For the Augustan or Medicean age of Greek literature we must look to the days of the Ptolemies, when such Greek intellect as was left took shelter in the ease and repose of the Court of Alexandria. There we find plenty of learning, plenty of science, plenty of imitative poetry; but the nearest approach to original genius is to be found in the pastorals of Theocritus. And they can hardly be set against Homer, Pindar, and the dramatic poets. The one really great Greek writer of this age is surely Polybius; and he passed the best of his days as the citizen and statesman of a free commonwealth.

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were men who were born, and many of whom had begun to write, before the Augustan Age began. To go no further than the writer in the Times has quite forgotten how large a portion of the writings of Horace was written before the Gate of Janus was shut, while the Civil War was still raging. The Augustan Age itself, the men born in that age, produced very little indeed. The only way in which the empire really encouraged genius and mental energy of any kind was by drawing forth indignant protests against itself, in the form of the writings of Lucan, Juvenal, and Tacitus. That is to say, the first crop of Roman literature was due to men who were formed in the days before the empire, the second crop was due to men whom the empire schooled into opposition to itself. For the mental energy which is called forth by imperialist rule and simple, the writer in the Times pure and simple, and Martial.

As to the Medicean age in Italy, that may mean either the last half of the fifteenth century or the first half of the sixteenth, or both together. It is by no means clear what exact time the writer in the Times means. The "Golden Age of modern Italy," he tells us, "dates from the termination of mediæval feuds ushering in domestic tyranny and foreign domination." It is by no means clear whether it was the domestic tyranny and foreign domination, or the termination of mediæval feuds, which ushered in the domestic tyranny and foreign domination. The Medicean period is generally held at least to take in the days of Lorenzo, and in the days of Lorenzo, whatever we say about domestic tyranny, foreign domination can hardly be said to have been yet ushered in. And whichever period we take for the Golden Age, whether the days of Lorenzo or the days of his son, can we call the Medicean period a time of real mental energy? A time of great mental activity it undoubtedly was, an age of revived art, of revived scholarship, of real mental energy, in many ways. But for real mental energy we must surely go to an earlier time. Surely the name of Dante, the true child and type of free Italy, outweighs all the elegant scholars and makers of pretty Latin verses who swarmed around Lorenzo and Leo.

To turn to our own land, the description which the writer gives of the time of Elizabeth sounds rather odd. "Under her sceptre" we are told that religious discussions subsided. Surely we cannot say that religious discussions subsided under Elizabeth, but rather that they took new shapes and were more definitely formalized. Under Henry, Edward, and Mary, there had been no small stock of religious discussions, but they were all discussions written on the spot. Some thought that change had gone too far, others that it had not gone far enough, but there was no setting up of altar against altar. In Elizabeth's time we get the beginning of religious discussions of the modern type; we find the first separatists from the established religion, the first Papists and the first Dissenters strictly so called. And surely the reign of Elizabeth, though not exactly a time of political convulsion within the kingdom, was a time of intense political excitement, anything but a time of ease and repose. And again, the display of mental energy during the Elizabethan age was of quite another sort from that of either the Augustan or the Medicean age. It was essentially a display, not of mere scholarship and imitation, but of the boldest original genius.

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